



Better Relationships, Better Outcomes

*Third Sector
Review &
Recommendations*

About the Review

Better Relationships, Better Outcomes is a review of the relationship between public bodies and the voluntary (or third) sector in the city of Glasgow. The review forms part of the city's Social Recovery Task Force set up following the Covid-19 pandemic to find better approaches to meeting the needs of all of Glasgow's citizens. This report is on the first stage of the review, undertaken by a Review Group of voluntary sector leaders in the city.

The Review Group have made a series of recommendations that seek to change approaches in the city, with the intention of developing ever-better relationships – relationships that are needed if we are to make the changes to people's lives that we all want to see.

The review will seek to determine what could realistically be done in the short and longer term to improve the impact of the third sector in the city. Key discussions have included:

- The existing Concordat between the council and the third sector, and what impact it has had
- What works well and what does not
- How third sector activity is commissioned and resourced
- What would improve collaboration
- What would improve inclusion and participation
- How do we best work alongside communities
- What changes does the third sector need to make
- What changes does the public sector need to make
- What is needed to support these changes

The Review Group Membership

Membership of the Review Group was by application from the voluntary sector. Thirty-three leaders from across the sector put their names forward, from which thirteen were selected. These are:

Allan McGinness	Lambhill Stables
Debbie McGowan	The Urban Fox Programme
Dougie Taylor	Yoker Community Campus and Drumchapel LIFE
Edna Okine	Empower Women for Change (EWFC)
Fiona Doring	Impact Arts (Projects) Ltd
Fiona Nicolson	Quarriers
Frances Monaghan	Wise Women
Isobel Lawson	Stepping Stones for Families
Jenny Reeve	Beatroute Arts
Michaela Collins	PEEK (Possibilities for Each and Every Kid)
Mohammed Razaq	West of Scotland Regional Equality Council
Rob Murray	Cancer Support Scotland
Tracey McFall	Partners in Advocacy

While members of the group are not there as representatives of any wider grouping, they were selected to as best as possible reflect the diversity of people, opinions and organisations in the city.

The group was chaired and facilitated by Ian Bruce, Chief Officer of Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector.

Our Values and Approach

The group set out the values on which they wanted to conduct the review. These are:

Respect	A recognition from the beginning of the process that we would have differences of opinion, and that this diversity of thought is valuable. Members agreed to be able to disagree and debate while remaining respectful of the opinions and positions of others
Chatham House Rules	While the contents of discussions are being shared, no individual person's contribution is identifiable. This enabled everyone to participate freely without fear of repercussions
Transparency	That the report and its recommendations should be public, including not just our recommendations but our analysis.
Engagement and Participation	That there should be clear engagement before any writing was undertaken to understand the sector's priorities and an opportunity for feedback from the sector on the draft report and recommendations.
Diversity of views	While the group hoped to always reach consensus, there was the risk that this would not be possible all the time. It was agreed that where necessary the group would come to a majority view, with minority views able to be included in our reports
Collective Responsibility	Once the group agreed a position, the expectation on all members of the group is to support that as a shared position.

The Review Focus

Following feedback from the sector via a survey and an event on the 25 November 2020, the review panel set out the following areas for discussion

Values	The fundamental principles that the relationship between the voluntary sector and public bodies should be built upon
Power Dynamics	The real and perceived power imbalances in the relationship, how we recognise the different resources and expertise that partners bring.
Community Empowerment	Strengthening the role of communities, how we facilitate community development, hear the voices and recognise the work of communities, and devolve decision-making and resources to local areas
Funding	Sharing of resources between sectors to achieve the best outcome, how we can increase the resources available in the city and use them as effectively as possible
Representation	Voluntary organisations contributing to decision-making in the city, how we lead and influence change, and are a defender of the rights of those who are often not heard
Communications & Understanding	The effective communication between partners, how we share information, knowledge and updates in a way that builds confidence and trust
Procurement	Achieving more with public sector procurement, ensuring that procurement achieves our goals of empowering communities, building community wealth and developing collaboration
Accountability & Implementation	How we hold each other responsible for achieving the best for people and communities by taking the action that is needed.

Values

Where are we now?

The third and public sectors share the aspiration and drive to do our best for the city and its citizens, but they each have different approaches and cultures. Even within the third and public sectors there are differences, between organisations or between council departments.

Differences in culture and approach may not be detrimental to the relationship between the third sector and the council in themselves; on the most part each has a culture that is appropriate for its context and role. The differences can, however, result in friction between partners, which must be addressed if we are to harness our united power to meet the complex challenges the city faces.

A Concordat between the public and third sector in the city was signed by representatives of both sectors in 2018 (<https://www.glasgowcpp.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=43789&p=0>). The Concordat is a high-level statement of aspiration to work together, but it did not set out clear values that would guide that partnership working. Third sector organisations in the city report that the Concordat has not had the desired impact on culture and process.

Many third sector leaders reported to this Review that they felt that the urgency and challenges associated with Covid-19 had done more to improve joint working in a year than the Concordat had achieved. The necessity of lockdown saw far greater understanding by the council of the third sector's role, and the sector was trusted to lead on some of the response. This felt radically different from how relationships and service development had previously been approached by council partners.

Where do we want to be?

The Review Group recognised the excellent partnerships that emerged during Covid-19 and hoped that it would be a catalyst for future change. There are also existing examples of good practice and partnership working that we can learn from and promote, like the Violence Against Women Partnership.

The Better Relationships, Better Outcomes Review Group identified that strong relationships are often based on shared values. Relationships between the third sector and the council would be strengthened by understanding and articulating these values.

The group believe it is important that these values are developed jointly with the council, however some examples were identified as being potentials for inclusion:

- Shared desire to achieve the best for Glasgow and its citizens
- Mutual respect and parity of esteem
- Commitment to shared planning and decision-making
- Recognition of the value of communities
- Trust, openness and honesty
- Sharing assets and resources to achieve more
- Recognition of our differences and the value each partner brings
- Collaboration rather than competition.

Developing these values is not sufficient in itself. They need to be embedded into our approach to working together. We must see values based leadership in all agencies and sectors.

We must also be prepared to reflect on whether we are consistently living the values and to constructively challenge each other when actions are not in line with our values.

What are our recommendations for change?

1	Public and third sector partners should agree a set of values that are shared across sectors and form the foundation for our relationship. These values should form a 'pledge' that third and public sector organisations / departments can sign up to.
2	Leaders in both the third and public sector should commit to promoting and demonstrating the values within and outside their own organisations. There should be clear plans and allocated resources for communicating the values (and other relevant work from the review) across both sectors.
3	Good examples of strong partnerships, built on shared values, should be identified and showcased as good practice. We should celebrate our successes and use them to encourage further progress.
4	Partners should agree how progress in improving our relationship will be evaluated, with regular reviews put in place to ensure that this process results in tangible change for the benefit of the city.

Power dynamics

Where are we now?

It is unavoidable that third and public sector bodies have different levels of power. Public bodies have a statutory role and control over the bulk of the resources available for social purposes in the city. Conversely very few third sector organisations have regular, guaranteed income, and often look towards the public sector for resourcing.

This difference is valid and understood – public bodies have a democratic mandate from, and accountability to, the citizens of Glasgow / Scotland / the UK. However, the difference also creates power dynamics in the relationship that can be unhelpful.

Third sector organisations feel that there is a lack of parity of esteem in the relationship; that the contribution that their organisations bring to the city's success is undervalued. The third sector is uniquely placed to build relationships with citizens and communities, but this work requires both time and resources. The perception among many in the sector is that the Council does not value this work or seeks to lead rather than support it.

Some third sector leaders have a sense that the work of the third sector is considered to be of lower importance or quality than that of the public sector. This may be because the third sector is often involved in early intervention and prevention work, where outputs are harder to measure.

There is a sense that the council does not trust the third sector, and that the third sector does not trust the council.

The Review Group also found that the third sector do not always feel able to influence priorities of public agencies, and instead find themselves forced to simply respond to priorities set by others. This can mean that the voices of citizens and communities are not always heard. While the third sector enjoys a degree of formal representation at a strategic level within the city's democratic infrastructure, its voice can easily be forgotten or ignored within individual departments, particularly when detailed plans are being developed. There was a perception that sometimes individual organisations which are favoured by officers or Councillors are better able to have their voice heard than that of other organisations or indeed the collective third sector voice as articulated through the TSI.

There are some good examples of power dynamics being managed effectively, such as the One Glasgow approach within Community Justice, which has valued and invested in third sector services and worked in partnership with the sector in planning and decision-making.

Again, the Covid-19 context had been an opportunity for a different way of working. The Review Group noted that organisations worked together in the best interests of communities. There was a feeling that this raised the visibility of the third sector, and that the public sector could better see the capacity of third sector organisations to work with communities and to use established relationships to respond quickly and effectively. The challenge for all now is how to capture the best of what has come from Covid-19 and resist returning to business as usual.

Where do we want to be?

We hope that, as we exit from the pandemic, we will be able to maintain the new ways of working that served the city so well, and to let go of old ways that didn't work and held us back. There is an appetite for that among all partners, but systems and cultures are hard to change.

The Review Group would like to see the third sector more routinely involved in the setting of priorities for the city and in developing plans for action. There are existing Community Engagement Standards, and now may be a good time to revisit those and ensure they are applied consistently.

There must be clear and consistent routes for the third sector to engage with Glasgow City council and other public bodies. Such routes need to include hearing citizen voices (as third sector organisations are often best placed to tell the stories of communities). These voices need to be placed at the heart of planning, not left feeling they are outside the room.

It is worth noting that there are unique and specific power dynamics at play around commissioning and through grants and contracts. The Better Relationships, Better Outcomes Review will be considering Funding and Procurement separately in due course, and that discussion is expected to be underpinned by the high-level conclusions in this paper about how power is used and shared in the city. Similarly, planned discussions by the Review Group on Community Empowerment and Representation will be influenced.

What are our recommendations for change?

5	A consistent approach should be developed (initially by the council, but with the goal of introducing this approach across the public sector) for engagement with the third sector. This should be aligned with the Third Sector Interface, which has a clear role in supporting third sector representatives and engagement with the public sector.
6	The knowledge, priorities and strengths of communities should contribute to public planning, recognising that third sector organisations are often best placed to identify and articulate those.
7	The “Team Glasgow” approach, where strategies are regarded as owned by all of Glasgow and not just by the Council, should be further developed and more widely used.
8	Further develop the role of third sector organisations in hearing and articulating the voices of citizens and communities in decision-making

Community Empowerment

Where are we now?

Community empowerment has been core to Scotland's public policy for a number of years, yet the pace of change has been slower and more cautious than many would have hoped. The review identified that there are communities ready, willing and waiting to take on greater responsibility – but a reluctance from public bodies to let go of power.

The lockdown necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that communities served by locally accountable third sector organisations working together are more resilient and empowered than places without. The third sector has shown itself able to connect people within communities and to meet their needs.

It is not an equal picture across the city. Not every community had strong third sector collaboration because there had been limited investment in building community capacity.

The BRBO Review group's concern was that public bodies regarded the work of developing community capacity and strength as of lower priority than other services, rather than being an investment that would make other services more effective.

The Review Group recognised that Participatory Budgeting (PB) was well-intentioned and had some successes. But review members felt the absence of a wider empowerment approach, previous (and geographically limited) community capacity building as part of the PB process could be regarded as tokenistic. We are still at the stage of having run pilots, and not at the stage of adopting a whole city approach.

Specific issues the group identified include:

- Community engagement is frequently focused on consultations – surveys and meetings hosted by public bodies that citizens are invited to attend. There is a place for this approach, but it is seen as 'ticking boxes' and there must also be recognition of the expertise and power that communities can bring to the table when we ask for more than opinions.
- There is a need to dramatically improve our approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion issues when thinking about community empowerment.

- Some community voices not being heard, and this is often the poorer and more marginalised communities. Some communities are seen as lacking capacity and are not fully involved in developments in their areas, which leads to these communities failing to engage in consultation because they are not used to being heard. It is these, most excluded communities, that require on-the-ground community development work to prepare them for wider empowerment initiatives.
- The Asset Transfer process in the city was identified as being a unempowering process for communities. Instead of asset transfer being seen as a powerful tool able to bring about greater community engagement, community wealth and better services, it instead feels like a legal / risk exercise by the local authority that grinds down the enthusiasm of local projects.

Note: Comments on Asset Transfer were made before the launch of the People Make Glasgow Communities Programme. We wait to see the approach that programme takes to determine whether it will have a positive impact on this issue.

- The third sector and its role in engaging and mobilising communities is not well understood. That results in not getting the best results for the city.
- It can be difficult for established third sector organisations to navigate Council structures. If even they find it difficult, then our expectation is that citizens seeking to make a difference will face an immediate barrier.
- There is mixed capacity within Community Councils in the city. In some areas there is no CC or it is ineffective and other local organisations have taken on some of the (non-statutory) roles that a Community Council would be expected to undertake. Community Councils should be a core part of our community engagement / empowerment approach and their voice is often absent from discussions.
- Access to information / data is essential for good community empowerment, but communities don't always have easy access to data that would help them understand issues.

Where do we want to be?

The group believe that good community empowerment and development must be locally led. The Thriving Places model was regarded as a good idea let down by failure to recognise this. Participants felt that while there may be examples of it working well, in many cases it felt like a Council initiative rather than something 'of the community'.

An example of an approach that could work better is to support locally accountable organisations to facilitate the development of local plans for areas. These would be community-led plans, with greater buy-in from communities and local community organisations who can support the plans to come to fruition.

The third sector's role in community empowerment needs to be better understood. Many third sector organisations are the embodiment of community empowerment – they are the mechanisms that local people have created and use to speak and act on their own behalf. They tend to work with a defined community (of place, of identity or of interest) and understand and are led by that community.

Ideally the group would like to see an increase in the investment in community development in the city, with community development workers in every community, building the capacity of citizens to take action. These should ideally be aligned to local community organisations, rather than seen as a city-wide initiative.

Alongside this there should be a step-change in how public bodies work with communities. It should be easier for both citizens and community organisations to engage with public bodies on issues that matter to them, rather than having to wait to be consulted.

Part of achieving this will require an effective Community Council in every area of the city. This, combined with an enhanced approach to local area planning that sees greater autonomy, authority, power and resource, is needed so that communities can take the lead on areas that are important to them.

What are our recommendations for change?

9	All partners should seek, through engagement with citizens, better approaches for creating empowered local communities. This should include reflecting on current approaches such as Thriving Places to identify what works and what does not.
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10	The role of community organisations as a mechanism through which communities speak and act on their own behalf should be embedded in city approaches to community engagement and involvement in decision-making.
11	The best decisions around priorities, approaches and resource allocation will be made at a community level with community involvement. A significantly improved approach to local decision-making is needed to achieve this.
12	Community organisations are critical in articulating and responding to local priorities. be able to demonstrate that they can articulate and evidence the priorities of communities. The city's partners should work together to ensure that every community has impactful local organisations.
13	Consideration needs given to equality, diversity and inclusion in community empowerment. This requires investment in both targeted engagement and ensuring that all people can engage in their local community. Those communities often described as 'hard to reach' are often the ones that have the poorest outcomes. Investment in engaging with them is critical to change this.
14	There should be a renewed focus on supporting Community Councils to form and be effective across the city, and ensuring that the Community Councils voice is heard at every level of local planning
15	Public bodies should consider how people and organisations that want to be engaged in an issue can be included more easily – supporting people to navigate the complex landscape. This could include having designated community engagement leads in each service.

Grant Funding

Where are we now?

Glasgow's third sector organisations all need appropriate levels of money to achieve positive outcomes for the city. Organisations can generate income through both voluntary income (e.g. grants, donations, memberships) and trading income (e.g. selling goods, renting space, delivering contracts).

Grant funding is a significant contributor to the sector's finances, and for some organisations it comprises nearly all their income. Grant funding includes income from independent grant funders, public bodies (local authorities, HSCPs, NHS Boards and Scottish Government) and national lottery distributors.

It has been a turbulent time for grants over the last two years. As well as the ending of the Integrated Grants Fund in the city and the implementation of the new Glasgow Communities Fund, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in disruption to grant-making, resulting in both challenges and innovation. Alongside this we are experiencing the end of European funding following Brexit, with a lack of clarity around exactly what will replace this. The Review Group's role was not to analyse any individual funding stream, but to make broader points of value to all grant funders and recipients.

The Review Group noted that funders, including the public sector, were more trusting and flexible during Covid-19. Organisations felt that during this period the Council had been flexible and willing to have conversations about how resource could be best used. That approach was critical to enabling the sector's response but contrasted with what the third sector normally experienced from the council as a funder, where some/many organisations felt they were being managed, rather than working in partnership.

For example, some organisations described how they had been asked for evidence of relatively small spend and of the bureaucracy of the process they had to undergo when seeking to make small changes to how funding was being used.

The process of applying for funding is often unhelpfully competitive, when it is collaboration that is needed to challenge complex social issues. Organisations have found that this competition for funding (and contracts) can undermine relationships and trust.

At a city-level, Review Group members reflected that there did not seem to be a strategic approach to funding the third sector. The group reflected that this lack of strategic direction resulted in missed opportunities to maximise funding for the city, get the best from funding available, and focus resources on the city's priorities.

There was specific feedback on Scottish Government funding distributed to the local authority or other public bodies. The Scottish Government's stated ambition is often that these funding streams will lead to organisations in both the third and statutory sector collaborating on developing proposals, allocating spend and delivering on outcomes, but in reality this does not always happen.

The Review Group were particularly concerned about the impact of current approaches to third sector funding on organisations' ambitions to be good employers and meet the Fair Work principles. Current funding arrangements were recognised as having a negative effect on the remuneration, job security and investment in workforce development in the third sector.

Participants gave examples of public sector colleagues having little sense of the total cost of an organisation, with budget holders in the public sector being sceptical of costs like IT replacement, HR support and even rent. A lack of understanding by public bodies can result in it being difficult for organisations to innovate, and even to include reasonable overhead costs in grant proposals.

Where do we want to be?

The Review Group reflected that there are opportunities to do things better. Funding is a critical part of the relationship between the public and third sector, but it is also critical to the city's ambition to empower communities.

The group felt that the involvement of communities in setting the priorities of funding, and that the involvement of citizens and communities in the decision-making process was critical. For local projects, there was a strong feeling that decisions around funding needed to be taken at a local level.

At a strategic level, a shift was needed to ensure that the city achieved the best outcomes in terms of securing and using resources effectively. A strategic approach between the public and third sector is needed to attract external investment into the city.

To facilitate that strategic approach, it would be valuable to have significantly improved data on the third sector in the city, what funding currently enters the city

and the impact of funding of the third sector on local outcomes. This would inform greater recognition of the role the third sector plays, and identify organisations that make critical contributions to local communities and strategies.

Funding programmes are more effective if they include a strong understanding of the third sector and are designed collaboratively.

Third sector organisations should be able to consistently embed Fair Work principles, e.g. ensuring fair pay for work that is comparable to equivalent roles in the public sector and providing longer-term job security.

What are our recommendations for change?

16	People involved in managing grants should be consistently knowledgeable about grant management and the third sector. This could be done by outsourcing grant management or improving knowledge internally.
17	A standard Council Family approach to distributing funding should be developed.
18	A strategic approach to attracting and using external funding should be developed jointly by the third and public sector. This should include clear principles around how spend is planned on additional resources made available by Scottish Government.
19	Decisions on funding should be made as locally as possible, while taking into account that specialist work / equalities may require to be managed at a city-wide level.
20	There should be a better approach to understanding the impact of Council funding. This will require work by all parties to measure and collate impact. A shared 'outcomes repository' may be helpful for people to consider
21	A shared commitment to Fair Work in the Third Sector should be developed either locally or nationally. This should be developed and recognised by third sector, public sector and independent funders.
22	Investment should be made in gathering and maintaining quality data on the third sector, funding of the sector and the impact that funding of the sector has on communities.

Representation

Where are we now?

At the core of current public policy is an aspiration for collaboration, with the inclusion of the third sector. Public sector governance and partnership arrangements in the city are extensive and include the formal Community Planning Partnership structures, HSCP governance, local and sector partnerships and policy /implementation meetings.

In line with Scottish Government policy, the Third Sector Interface is the single mechanism for facilitating representation in the city. The Glasgow Third Sector Interface Network (GTSIN) was established to facilitate this process – bringing together representatives of various thematic and geographical third sector networks to inform and facilitate representation.

The Review Group identified that there was a lack of awareness and understanding of the existing structures amongst third sector organisations in the city. This is compounded by lack of clarity across the sector in how public sector governance structures operate.

Some specific tensions were identified in the process of representing the sector:

- There are the tensions around the purpose of representation, between the sector as a voice of communities / champion of human rights, and the sector as a collaborative partner in policy development, implementation and delivery.
- These tensions are perpetuated in the context of funding – with a risk of representatives being seen as “too close” to the system, or indeed of representatives fearing that vocal challenge would put funding at risk.
- There is a perception (from public and third sector) that it is possible to have a single third sector message on issues. The context of the sector makes this nearly always impossible – particularly on implementation issues.
- Third sector organisations don’t always like being ‘represented’. Many organisations will have contributions that they feel should be heard directly by decision-makers.

- There are hundreds of decision-making spaces in the city and thousands of third sector organisations. There is simply insufficient resource in the system to enable full representation of the sector at every level.

It should be noted that these challenges around third sector representation are not unique to Glasgow. Third Sector Interfaces across Scotland have taken different approaches to facilitating representation and comparable infrastructure organisations in England and Wales also face similar challenges.

The group also recognised a challenge around the tension between the sector as a whole and individual third sector organisations. This included:

- examples of organisations being 'hand-picked' to be included in representative structures and this then being regarded as third sector representation.
- examples of poor behaviour by third sector organisations reflecting poorly on the sector as a whole.

Where do we want to be?

The Review Group recognised the importance of getting representation of the third sector right. They also identified that many of the improvements required in this area needed to be led by the third sector.

The group aspired to see a dynamic representation approach in the third sector that focused on identifying and articulating key strategic issues from the sector. While there will be diversity of views within the sector, there is also substantial common ground that organisations can overwhelmingly agree on.

There are 'golden threads' or key messages that can be articulated, alongside any available analysis of the diversity of opinions. These golden threads are likely to include the importance of communities, of engagement with the third sector and of adopting human rights approaches.

The group identified examples of representative bodies in other sectors that do not seek to represent each of their individual members, instead speaking on behalf of the sector as a whole and creating opportunities for collaboration, such as the Chamber of Commerce.

There was a recognition that the scale of the sector and the system meant that sufficient resources for representation were critical. This was not just about attending meetings, but also about good engagement with the third sector and robust fundamental understanding of the sector and its contribution.

What are our recommendations for change?

23	The city's approach to third sector representation should be redesigned to ensure that it is fully participative and bottom-up. The third sector itself should carry out this redesign, and the council's role is to support it.
24	Third sector representatives should be able to challenge decisions freely and professionally, without risk of exclusion or disadvantage. Whether or not an organisation receives funding from the council should never be a factor in limiting or promoting the voice of representatives.
25	There should be a baseline of sufficient resources to enable good quality representation.
26	All partners need to recognise that there are a multitude of voices in the sector and that representatives should focus on the 'common threads'

The group would like to thank Dr Jane Cullingworth, Glasgow University, for the contribution she and her research (Democratic Governance Through Intermediary Bodies, 2021) made to the group's discussions on this topic.

Communication & Understanding

Where are we now?

Effective communication and mutual understanding are critical in building successful relationships between the third sector and Glasgow City Council. Many of the wider challenges that have been identified in the review group stem from or are exacerbated by poor communication or lack of understanding.

The third sector recognise the scale of the task the council faces in communicating effectively. Glasgow is a large city, and the council employs over 20,000 staff directly as well thousands more across the 'council family' of ALEOs, and around 4,000 third sector organisations.

The Review Group reflected that communication between the council family and the third sector is not always effective. Members of the group described difficulties in getting information, reflecting that the system could be impenetrable – even trying to work out where information was held could be difficult. It was recognised that this challenge was probably not unique to the third sector and that perhaps even council staff faced challenges with this.

Communication was felt by the group to often happen on the Council's terms – communication channels were only opened when the Council had something they wanted to discuss. This left third sector organisations with a sense of being talked 'at' rather than 'with'.

Some organisations felt excluded, and their experience was that the council communicates primarily with chosen organisations, known to them either as service providers or through existing relationships with council officers.

Generally it was felt that one of the obstacles to effective communication was that the value of the third sector is not well understood. Group members talked about their experience of Council officers making assumptions about the quality of work in the third sector and undervaluing the ability of the sector to work alongside and articulate the expectations of communities.

There are, of course, examples of good practice, and the Review Group were keen to recognise that. Members talked about examples of strong communication and time

spent to develop mutual understanding. However, these examples were regarded as the exception rather than the rule.

The group were particularly keen to understand whether public sector colleagues feel it is difficult to communicate with the third sector.

Where do we want to be?

The Covid-19 pandemic provides both sectors with an opportunity for a fresh start in our communications. The sector wants to play its part in building a better Glasgow and can help to shape and deliver change – but it needs the opportunities to be involved, connected and included.

We need to build a strong mutual understanding, with partners understanding and valuing each other's strengths, challenges and priorities. To achieve this, communications need to be open and respectful, with regular engagement between the public sector and representative organisations, but also by creating regular opportunities for all third sector organisations to engage.

One area that must be better understood is the relationship between communities and the third sector. Too often public bodies discount the role of third sector organisations in communities. But most third sector organisations exist only because the communities they serve decided they wanted to speak and act on their own behalf. These third sector organisations were created by the community often with the very purpose of being the vehicle for the community's voice.

These organisations remain accountable to their communities through their governance and continually adapt their messages and services based upon that engagement. Often it is third sector organisations working with people that are first to identify emerging challenges.

With this approach the third sector is well placed to bring the strength and intelligence of communities to the table. This should be central to the city's approach to community engagement and planning.

What are our recommendations for change?

27	There should be regular meetings between the sector and the city leadership, with these events open to any third sector organisation, using appropriate
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	meeting formats to ensure they are participative (e.g. Open Space / Conversation Café).
28	These should be mirrored by thematic / department level conversations, focused on areas of work across the public sector. There are examples of good work such as the work of Everyone's Children & the City Wide Forum.
29	There should be a formal programme of learning to support mutual understanding between sectors. This could include secondments, showcasing, job swaps and job shadowing.
30	The local authority may want to consider creating a nominated person in each department with responsibility for engagement with the third sector
31	Recognising that the different cultures of the public and third sectors may lead to different expectations of formality or other aspects of tone, the third sector and the council should identify the expectations of both sides and draw up a mutually agreed code of conduct.
32	Consideration should be given to developing a leadership programme for the city, open to both public and third sector, with the joint aim of improving leadership behaviours and developing relationships / understanding.

Procurement

Where are we now?

Procurement is a key process for providing services for citizens and communities. It is critical that public bodies are transparent in purchasing, and that value is achieved for public money.

The Review Group found that traditional procurement is not always achieving the best outcomes for the city. An approach that works for capital projects or buying computers, is not necessarily appropriate for the provision of services for people. We believe that good procurement should be about getting better services, not cheaper services.

The Review Group noted that too often the third sector is only involved at the final stage in the development of services. This misses the opportunity for third sector organisations to contribute their knowledge and expertise to the development of the service being commissioned. We recognise the challenge that commissioners have in being seen for the procurement process to be fair, but that should not be at the expense of commissioning the right service.

The procurement process can undermine rather than strengthen relationships, particularly as it is a process that is not always seen as transparent. Organisations told the Review Group they felt forced into competition rather than collaboration and that they were only seen as providers rather than partners. Critically, there is also a perception of an unfair transfer of the financial risk – a particular challenge for small organisations.

Procurement creates a drain on the resources of third sector organisations, particularly in terms of management capacity. This creates a significant barrier, especially for smaller third sector organisations.

Finally, procurement can create artificial and challenging arrangements. Procurement is often done at scale so commissioners can reduce the number of primary contracts they need to manage. These larger contracts often result in rapidly pulled together partnerships, inappropriate subcontractor arrangements and an advantage for larger organisations. Indeed, the Review Group discussed instances where organisations had bid for work, not been successful and then been asked by the winning bidder to deliver some of the work.

These issues are not new and there are already new models that have been tested - public social partnerships, alliance commissioning and community commissioning amongst others. These approaches – which have different strengths and weaknesses – demonstrate that we can undertake commissioning more effectively.

The understanding of the Review Group was that public bodies do not regard procurement as a particularly effective or easy process either. They also recognised some current confusion caused by Brexit, and perhaps an opportunity to change things outwith the stringent EU Procurement rules.

Where do we want to be?

The Review Group recognised that commissioners and procurement officials have a challenging balance to achieve, and that there is an onus on them to ensure compliance with complex regulations. However, we also believe that better models of commissioning exist and can be used effectively.

Commissioners are currently faced with a false dichotomy, between grant funding and procurement. The reality is though that competitive grant processes are not necessarily suitable for the delivery of consistent services across the city, while traditional procurement is inadequate for services that should be embedded in communities.

We would like to see public bodies take a new approach to commissioning. That new approach may be alliance commissioning, community commissioning or public social partnerships, something else entirely or a mix of all of these. What matters most however is that in future commissioning:

- Involves the third sector and the people who services are for in the framing of the challenge and the design of the solution – recognising that no individual or agency has all the answers. This should include involvement in the design, commissioning and review of services.
- Facilitates collaboration between third sector organisations, and also across sectors. We want a culture that rewards positive collaboration and recognises the strengths different organisations bring.

- Is accessible and transparent, so that the public and organisations can see the opportunities and understand how to get involved, with fewer barriers to participation.
- Better delivers on the city's values, with improved use of community benefit clauses, embedded commitments to fair work and the living wage, and a strong contribution to community wealth building.

What are our recommendations for change?

33	There should be increased use of modern commissioning models – such as Public Social Partnerships, Community Commissioning and Alliance Commissioning. These should become the norm, not the exception.
34	The risks associated with delivery of services by third sector organisations should be more fairly shared between commissioners and providers.
35	Commissioning should encourage learning, innovation and risk-taking, and it should be easier to change provision mid contract.
36	There should be third sector and community / service user involvement in the design and review of services.
37	Public bodies and GCVS should undertake joint work to improve the use of community benefit clauses, embed fair work into procurement, and strengthen the commitment to community wealth building approaches.
38	GCVS should investigate the feasibility of developing a third sector structure to facilitate collaborative procurement in the city.

Implementation and Accountability

Where are we now?

The Concordat agreement between Glasgow City Council and the third sector launched in September 2018 identified many of the same issues as the Better Relationships Group have identified during this review. The third sector welcomed the Concordat, but the review group recognised it has not reshaped the relationship between the council and the third sector in the way that was hoped. Views from the sector suggest:

- The Concordat was not universally adopted across the council family, and awareness of it amongst officers remained relatively low.
- The sector was unaware of an implementation plan behind the Concordat and there was a sense of 'nothing has happened'.
- Sometimes the sector regarded the concordat as simply a litmus test of an individual policy or decision, considering whether the decision 'reflects the values of the concordat'.

This reflects the wider set of challenges we identified when looking at Power Dynamics.

Where do we want to be?

Having developed this report and recommendations, the Review Group are hopeful that they will be of value and will be implemented. A meaningful shift in the relationship between the council family and the third sector is necessary if we are to achieve our shared ambitions to deliver for the people of our city.

We want to see a final set of recommendations agreed, a suitable structure for their implementation and a clear approach to measuring their implementation and success. There should be an action plan with specific tasks to be completed and clarity as to where responsibility for them lies.

Some of the recommendations are complex and we expect it may take years to implement them all fully. What is important is that there is a clear timeline and

regular process. Senior buy-in from public and third sector partners will be critical to ensuring that real change occurs.

We anticipate that, despite the best of intentions, there will be occasions where mistakes are made by both the public and the third sector. It is important that in future we have a culture where we are able to raise issues safely, and take joint steps to achieve improvements.

The Review Group hopes that our learning will be valuable nationally and that the changes we plan for in Glasgow will become a model of engagement, to be replicated elsewhere.

What are our recommendations for change?

39	Leaders from across the Council family should meet with the Review Group to agree a final set of actions from the recommendations. The Review Group accept that some of our recommendations may not be feasible for the partners to implement. We would prefer an honest refusal of such recommendations, rather than their acceptance with no meaningful change.
40	The final set of actions should be presented for approval to the appropriate Council committee and the Community Planning Partnership. It should also be presented for information at other Council family structures such as the HSCP Integrated Joint Board.
41	A full action plan should be developed with a clear timeline for implementation, and clear KPIs to measure both implementation and impact
42	An implementation group should be developed with representation from the third sector and across Council departments and wider Council family.
43	A progress report should be submitted annually to the Community Planning Partnership on implementation.
44	There should be regular meetings between the GCVS Chief Executive and senior Councillors and officers, with a suitable process for raising issues with implementation.

Thanks

I would first like to thank the members of the Review Group for their work on this report. The people who nominated themselves for this group have key roles within Glasgow's third sector. They made time in their busy diaries to take part in this process and brought the best of their experience to the table. Our discussions were not always easy, but they were always respectful, well-informed, and constructive.

On behalf of the group, I'd then like to thank everybody else who made it happen. In particular:

- The political and officer leadership within Glasgow City Council who were willing to recognise that we could improve relationships in the city and in doing so improve outcomes for people.
- Everyone in the third sector who supported the process, with particular thank you to those who contributed their knowledge through surveys, events and feedback.
- Dr Jane Cullingworth, Glasgow University, who shared her research (Democratic Governance Through Intermediary Bodies, 2021) and gave her time to the group's discussions on Representation.



Better Relationships
Better Outcomes